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THE DUTCH RESISTANCE MOVEMENT

Unlike resistance movements in many other countries occupied by Germany, the Dutch underground is largely nonpolitical in character. The German occupation modified most of the incompatibilities which prior to 1940 divided the Dutch people into many small, sharply defined groups. As a result German administration has been faced with widespread and determined opposition from all elements of the Dutch population.

In France, the "Resistance" was considered synonymous with a progressive, if not a revolutionary, political outlook. In the Netherlands, however, all political groupings have joined in opposing the occupying force under leadership which has remained largely in the hands of the substantial and conservative Dutch elements which held the reins of authority in peace time.

The centralization process has been gradual. In the early days of the German occupation there was no large underground group with a completed national organization. Early resistance was chiefly individual, sporadic, and at best locally organized. Even today centralization has not been wholly achieved and individual, local resistance represents a substantial part of Dutch efforts to disrupt the Nazi system.

The Dutch resistance movement also has been primarily nonmilitary in character. No large underground paramilitary formation has developed. This is probably due to the scarcity of arms and ammunition, to the uncoordinated activities of the three principal armed groups, and to German counter-measures. The underground has concerned itself chiefly with obstructing German administration, obtaining military, political, and economic intelligence, and caring for the so-called *onderduikers* (undergrounders) and their families. The *onderduikers*, estimated to number 300,000 or more, are those persons who for a variety of reasons, particularly to avoid labor deportation, have been obliged to conceal their identity or whereabouts from German and quisling authorities. Armed bands, when they have been employed, have served to forward these objectives. The hi-jacking of identification and rationing documents for the use of the *onderduikers*, for example, has been a common task of the armed bands. Until Allied troops reached Dutch soil, Dutch underground forces carried out few strictly military missions.

During most of the occupation period, contact between the resistance and the Dutch Government-in-exile has been poor. This has been partly due to the attitude and shortcomings of the Government and partly to the substantially independent outlook of the resistance itself.

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Many of the resistance members in the now liberated areas of the Netherlands still regard with suspicion Dutch officials who have spent the war years in London.

There are four principal organizations in the Dutch underground: the *Landelijke Organisatie* (L.O.), the *Orde Dienst* (O.D.), the *Raad van Verzet* (R.V.V.) and the *Nationaal Comité* (N.C.). In addition, the resistance comprises some prewar political parties and many small local groups. Both appear to have played important roles (former party leaders have been especially active in sponsoring the underground press), but in general they have carried on their resistance activities through the medium of one or more of the four principal resistance organizations.

The *Landelijke Organisatie* (National Organization) is a highly centralized national organization which devotes itself principally to the acquisition and distribution of documents which the *onderduikers* and their families need for their own support. For this purpose it organizes and supports a large number of semiautonomous armed bands called *knok ploegen* (K.P.). The L.O. has a pyramidal structure and is divided functionally into four units: personal identification, armed bands, falsification of documents, and investigation. The L.O. is largely conservative in its political composition, but its members do not appear united behind any particular program or ideology. It had neither possessed nor sought close contact with the Dutch Government-in-exile.

The *Orde Dienst*, organized under the aegis of former army officers, is one of the oldest Dutch resistance groups. Its purpose has been to build up an elaborate national organization which could be used to assist in maintaining order when the Germans retreated from the Netherlands. In addition it has gathered intelligence and, with interruptions, has maintained an excellent radio communication service with the outside world. This radio transmission service, for a long time better than that of any other underground group, enabled the O.D. to maintain close contact with the Dutch Government in London. Otherwise the O.D. was comparatively inactive until some areas of the Netherlands were liberated. Then the O.D. appeared with many new recruits who never before had done underground work and thereby incurred considerable ill will from other underground groups. Politically the O.D. is rightist and reactionary. Its higher echelons include a number of socially prominent and wealthy men. The O.D. appears to favor strong central leadership in post-war Holland, a delay in the recall of Parliament, and an increase in the power of the Crown during the rehabilitation period. Some O.D. members have gained influential positions either on Prince Bernhard's staff or in Dutch Civil Affairs.

The *Raad van Verzet* (Council of Resistance) was founded immediately after the widespread but unsuccessful strikes of May 1943 under the leadership of the chief of the O.D. radio service, who favored more active resistance operations than the O.D. was willing to permit, and left the O.D., with his well-organized radio network. The R.V.V. originally attempted to coordinate the activities of all armed resistance groups. Op-

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position from other resistance organizations prevented complete unification. As a result the R.V.V. became a separate resistance organization, which maintained contacts with other clandestine groups but carried out separate raids on German offices, liquidated particularly dangerous individuals, organized sabotage, and aided the *onderduikers*. The R.V.V. has its own armed bands (also called *knok ploegen*) which often have operated in conjunction with L.O. armed bands. The R.V.V. has made its radio network available for the transmission of reports and directives between the Government-in-exile and various resistance organizations. While the R.V.V. includes members of all political tendencies, it appears to be oriented somewhat toward the Left and has received the support of the Dutch Communist Party.

The *Nationaal Comite*, like the R.V.V., is a separate resistance organization originally intended to serve as an overall coordinating body. It consists of a comparatively small number of men of high standing in Dutch public, business, and professional life. Through their extensive communications these men gather and evaluate a large amount of intelligence. On this basis they seek to give direction to public as well as clandestine resistance. The N.C. works closely with civil service, transport, industrial, and financial leaders and carries on the greater part of its activity in the four largest Dutch cities. Its importance and influence far exceed its numerical strength. By its very nature the N.C. is politically conservative, though it is probably more nearly Right-Center than Right.

In the fall of 1944 the *knok-ploegen*, which had been semiautonomously affiliated with the L.O. and the R.V.V., became a separate organization on a national scale with a structure patterned after that of the L.O. and possibly with a similar political and economic orientation. In liberated Netherlands the K.P. has displayed a tendency toward independent action, temporarily resisting incorporation into the Dutch Forces of the Interior and pursuing a somewhat undisciplined course.

Chief among the smaller resistance organizations has been the *Nationaal Steunfonds* or N.S.F. (National Financial Aid) which, since the beginning of the occupation, has sought to obtain and distribute funds to the *onderduikers*. The N.S.F. has its own sources of funds and also coordinates the relief activities of local resistance organizations. Its leadership reportedly is drawn from wealthy and highly-placed Dutchmen. Since 1943 it has received financial support from the Government-in-exile. Other small resistance groups concern themselves chiefly with organizing and directing anti-German activities of special categories of the population. They include the Organization of Civil Servants, the Doctors' Resistance, and the Students' Resistance.

The four most important Dutch underground newspapers are the *Vrij Nederland*, *Trouw*, *Het Parool*, and *De Waarheid*. The oldest, *Vrij Nederland* initially represented the ideas of the conservative Anti-Revolutionary Party but was abandoned by this Party and moved to the Left. The Anti-Revolutionary Party founded *Trouw*, which reportedly has a larger circulation than any other Dutch underground paper and is widely

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read in both Catholic and Calvinist circles. *Het Parool*, established by Social Democrats, developed from the popular Pieter 'T Hoen "open letters" which received wide circulation in the early days of occupation. The paper, however, lost contact with Social Democratic circles in 1942 and subsequently followed a progressive policy. Recently it has followed a course parallel to that of *Vrij Nederland* and has engaged in joint enterprises with the latter paper. *De Waarheid* is the official organ of the Dutch Communist Party and is the principal known activity of the Dutch Communists. Further information on the organization and resistance activities of the Dutch Communists must await the liberation of Amsterdam and Rotterdam, the chief centers of Communist activity.

Following many early failures to form an overall resistance committee, a coordinating body was formed early in 1944, called the *Kern* or the *Top*, including representatives of most underground groups and clandestine newspapers. The organization was the result of the promptings of the Government-in-exile and the initiative of the N.C. In August 1944, the Dutch Government, anticipating a speedy liberation of the Netherlands, suggested that the *Kern* should be expanded and reconstituted. This was effected and the new committee, renamed the *Raad van Illegaliteit*, became the most important unit of the underground. Little else is known of the composition or functions of the R.V.I. Indications are, however, that Queen Wilhelmina will select from the R.V.I. at least some of her advisors, once liberation has been completed.

In September 1944, Prince Bernhard, chief of the Dutch Forces of the Interior, initiated efforts to unify the Dutch armed resistance groups and called upon the K.P., the R.V.V., and the O.D. to join a coordinating organization called the *Delta*. These efforts have not been wholly successful. Dutch armed resistance in recent months has been further handicapped by highly repressive German counter-measures.

Like many occupied nations the Dutch are confronted with the post-war problem of absorbing in orderly fashion former active underground units into the national life. This problem has been somewhat easier in Holland than in France since liberation has been more gradual and Dutch armed bands are less numerous and less military in character. The issue of disarming resistance forces in liberated areas has not yet arisen since these units have been formed into "task forces" which are assigned to guard duties, special services with Dutch Military Government, or military operations. Individuals are allowed to retain arms only if they volunteer for services of this kind. The present policy is to make the "task forces" one of the bases of a reconstituted Dutch Army.

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